

GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS IN THE BLACK SEA / CASPIAN REGION

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by

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ABSTRACT

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After the Cold War, the region between the Black and Caspian Seas became a strategic corridor between Europe, the Middle East, North and Central Asia, in fact a crossroad of energy corridors. The area's huge resources in natural gas and oil (according to some estimates 3 percent of total world proven reserves) have increased the interests of the major actors. The U. S. and the E.U. on the one hand and Russia on the other hand, but also Turkey, Israel and even Iran have sought to redefine their strategy in the region and to win advantage against their opponents.

Russian foreign policy has become more radical and active in the last few years and Moscow seeks to reaffirm the status-quo in this zone. The E.U. is currently too weak to counterbalance the advance of Russia in the region and the U.S seems to be fully engaged in Afghanistan and in the Persian Gulf zone.

This paper will analyze the interest of the major actors in the region between the Black and Caspian Seas and will suggest what the United States could do to help sustain a favorable balance in the region.

GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS IN THE BLACK SEA / CASPIAN REGION

Re-reading Zbigniew Brzezinski's book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, you could easily realize that the space between The Black Sea and Caspian Sea has completely changed in the last 20 years. The interests of the major actors have transformed the geo-political environment in this region. The United States and European Union on one hand and Russia on another, as "geostrategic players", but also Turkey, Israel and even Iran as "geopolitical pivots"¹ tried to redefine their strategy in this zone and to gain some advantages compared with their opponents.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War was seen by the Western countries and especially by the United States as an opportunity to ensure that Russia will never return as a major Eurasian player and to preclude the possible revival of her imperial ambition. To achieve this goal, the West encouraged the independent movement in the former Soviet countries, to pull them out from under the influence of Russia, and in fact to weaken and contain Russia.² The first step in this strategy was to attract the former Warsaw Pact's member countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria), and some of the former Soviet republics (the Baltic countries – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) to become European Union members and to join NATO. The second step has consisted in encouraging democratic movements (so called "colored revolutions")³ in former Soviet countries with large Russian populations and with Russian affiliation, traditions and customs (Ukraine, Belarus, Republic of Moldavia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan).

Personally, I think there was a third stage of this strategy, including the redesign of the borders, creation of a new “sphere of influence”,⁴ a “sanitary belt” between the West and Russia, by encouraging separatist tendencies and creating new independent states such as West Ukraine⁵ (we have seen the fracture between west and east Ukraine in the popular vote during their last elections), Moldova (without the disputed Transdnistria region), Chechnya, Ingushetia or Dagestan.

The return of Russia, at least as a regional power, in the international arena is a result of recently recorded political, diplomatic, economic and even military successes (the custom union agreement signed with Belarus and Kazakhstan, the installation of pro-Russian governments in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the extension of military agreements with Ukraine and Armenia, the installation of new military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as a result of the war in Georgia, etc.), while the US has seemed to be preoccupied by the “war on terror” in Iraq and Afghanistan. All this has prevented the implementation of this third stage. Furthermore, the war in Georgia (2008) marked the end of unipolarity in international affairs, according to some political analysts,⁶ and created conditions of resetting the balance of power, especially in East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

On the other hand, as a result of energy crises, the region between Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia became a strategic corridor toward Europe, the Middle East and East Asia, and attracted the interest of the major players in this zone situated on a crossroads between three energy networks:

- Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia;
- Central Asia, Caucasus, Turkey, Israel;

- China, Central Asia, Caucasus.

These corridors are very important especially for European Union energy supply security but also for the United States, Israel, Russia, China and Turkey. The huge resources in gas and oil (according to some estimation 15 percent of the world's total oil proven reserves and 50% of gas reserves)⁷ have increased the interests of the major actors not only states but also civil and multinational companies, and heightened the fight between them regarding influencing the local energy providers.

The Russia – Georgia war, increasing of EU oil and gas dependency on Russia, the Kyrgyzstan “revolution” from November 2010, the Iran nuclear disputes, US plans to deploy some form of missile defense shield in Eastern Europe, Israel-Turkey conflict regarding the Gaza siege, and not least, the huge economic crisis that strongly affects all the countries from this region, are just some of main events that caused the raising of instability in this zone. Moreover, the existence of the “frozen conflicts”⁸ in very close vicinity of the region increases its vulnerability.

The US invasion in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan determined the increasing American interest in this zone. The more active presence of the USA in this region and the US decision to establish new military bases in Bulgaria and Romania and install the anti ballistic missile system (AEGIS) in Poland and Romania made Russia concerned and determined to regain her lost power and influence in this zone.

If Russia succeeds in developing a new security architectures in her former sphere of influence, as she started after 2000, when Vladimir Putin was elected president, the democratization process of the countries from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, the implementation of free market policies in that zone, and the

diversification of access to vital energy sources will be slowed or even halted, which will determine the return of Russia to imperial status.

From my point of view, due to the implications on United States interests in this region, the US must quickly change its foreign policy in this region and the American strategy should be focused on neutralization of the Russian effort to become at least a regional power.

Russian Influence in the Caucasus History and the New Security Challenges

A brief foray in to the history and geography of Russia reveals that because of the vastness of its territory (11 time zones between the Baltic Sea and the Pacific Ocean) and the landscape's configuration (large plains and low plateaus), the Russian Empire (since the 16th century), Soviet Union (from 1919 to 1989) or Republic of Russia (after 1990), have tried to adjust their foreign politics and military strategies in order to resist external threats, to protect its interests and its vital spaces. The lack of natural barriers that could potentially enforce defensive positions around the heart of the Russian territory (the land between St. Petersburg, Moscow, Donetsk, Volga Plain, Ural Mountains and the Barents Sea in the North), determined an offensive and aggressive political stance towards the neighboring countries. According to the statement made by Catherine II the Great (1762–1796): “I have no way to defend my borders, except to extend them”. So, Russian conquest was focused on reaching step by step the Carpathian Mountains and the Baltic Sea in the west and northwest, the Black Sea and Caspian Sea in the south, then, the Tien Shan and Pamir Mountains range in the south east, and later the Pacific Ocean coast in the Far East (natural boundaries).⁹

The conquest of the Caucasus followed this policy, and the territorial expansion of Russia in this zone started in the 16th century when the Russian king Ivan IV “The Terrible” defeated the Tatars, annexed Astrakhan Khanate in 1556 (what is now Kalmykia), and gained access to future territories in Caucasus¹⁰ and Central Asia. Then, after the wars with Persia (1804-1813, and 1826-1828), the Russian Empire annexed Georgia, Dagestan, North of Azerbaijan and North of Armenia (including the largest Armenian city Yerevan), and after the war with the Ottoman Empire (1877-1878), zones around Batumi (Georgia), Kars and Ardahan (Turkey), regions that will be grouped in the Russian province of Georgia.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 provided a good opportunity for Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to regain their independence, initially as a confederative republic (the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic which lasted from February to May 1918), and then as independent countries (we have to mention here that the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was the first modern parliamentary republic in the Muslim World, and the first Islamic country that gave to women the right to vote). Very soon Armenia invaded her neighbors, to liberate parts of provinces most populated by the Armenians (in Georgia, the cities of Borchalu and Akhalkalaki and in Azerbaijan the Karabakh region), but the war was stopped by British intervention and despite military success these territory remained outside the Armenian Democratic Republic.

The discovery of the huge oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea zone and in Central Asia, in the early years of the twentieth century, attracted the attention of the Western countries to these areas. At the end of World War I, the Entente powers (United Kingdom, France, United States of America, Italy and Japan) recognized the de

facto existence of three new Caucasian republics – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan (Treaty of Sevres).¹¹ At that moment, large parts of Turkey were under military occupation and that determined the establishment of the Turkish national movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He started the Turkish War of Independence to expel the occupation forces from the country and to revoke the terms of the Treaty of Sevres. In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne¹² confirmed international recognition of the sovereignty of the new Republic of Turkey.

World War I and the rise of modern Turkey produced a power vacuum in international relationships in Central Asia and the Caucasus that Russia knew how to exploit. In 1920 Georgia was under British protection (to prevent conflict with Armenia supported by the U.S.), Armenia was attacked by the Turkish nationalist forces and lost more than 50 percent of the territory granted by Treaty of Sevres and Azerbaijan was invaded by the Bolshevik 11th Soviet Red Army (Lenin said that the invasion was justified because “Soviet Russia could not survive without Baku oil”).¹³ By 1921 Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia had been annexed by Russia as part of the Transcaucasian SFSR, and for more than 70 years the Caucasus would be under Russia Soviet authority.

The situation is more complicated today because of the Russian policy to mix the nations that it has conquered. To maintain her influence in the zone, Russia has tried to manage the independence movements of the provinces, and also to support minorities or peripheral nationalities as a continuation of the imperial policy “divide and impera.”¹⁴ This politics can be easily seen in the North Caucasus.

The North Caucasus, compared with other areas from the Russian sphere of dominance, is a relatively small territory where there are tens of ancient nationalities living with different culture and religious beliefs, all of them having been incorporated into Russian boundaries by the Russian tsars, in the nineteenth century. The communist regime was very strict and every “dissident” was deported to Siberia. Some of the local population was replaced in the 1950’s – 1960’s with a population of Russian origins. On another hand, tribalism is common for almost all ethnic groups, the clan and the blood link being more important than ethnicity or religion. During the war led by the USSR in Afghanistan, the clans changed their loyalty from one side to another according to their leader’s interests, just as happens today in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The “ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity”¹⁵ of the region has played an important role in favor of Russia, who used the dissension between ethnic groups as a tool for keeping a strong control over the zone and to dominate the minorities. Even though such dissent existed in Soviet time, it came to the attention of the international public following the dissolution of the USSR, first as ethnic struggles and then as independent movements. Russia supported the fighting factions as much as the rivalries between former Soviet republics in so called “frozen conflicts”, just to maintain her status in an area of interest.

For example, Russia sustained the Ossets in 1992-1993 against Ingush guerillas who wanted to recover the region Prigorodny which was attached by President Nikita Khrushchev to Ossetia.¹⁶

In the same period of time, Moscow supported the Abkhazian and Chechen insurgency against the Georgian Army when Georgia wanted to reassert control over

the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and one year later Russian troops invaded Chechnya “in order to prevent Chechnya's effort to secede from the Russian Federation. After almost 2 years of fighting, a peace agreement was reached. As part of that agreement, resolution of Chechnya's call for independence was postponed for up to 5 years. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed and over 500,000 persons displaced since the conflict began.”¹⁷ But the story wasn't finished. After a short calm period, the war restarted in the region but in another way – terrorism. The new Russian president Vladimir Putin sent more than 20,000 soldiers into Chechnya to eliminate the secession threat. The effect – thousands of dead, tens of thousands of internally displaced persons, dozens of cities destroyed (for example the largest city Grozny), increasing Muslim insurgency, corruption and no end to poverty.

In fact, the Muslim insurgency became more active, especially against Russian officials and local collaborationist structures (it is more active today with Iranian and even Turkish support) as a result of the last 20 years in which Russia encouraged corruption and tribal local leaders who served for preservation of their domination in the zone. The Caucasus Emirate, whose leader (emir) is Doku Umarov (a veteran of the second Chechen war), was founded in 2007 as a successor of the Republic of Ichkeria, a Chechen secessionist government (2006). Umarov doesn't recognize the rule of law or Russia's boundaries and is trying to extend the influence of his movement over Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, to establish an Islamic Emirate where Sharia, the fundamentalist Islamic law, will be the supreme law.

As a result, Russia has had to face terrorism, not just in the territory of her secessionist republics, but everywhere, even in her capital city. The Red Square

bombing (2003), Stavropol train bombing (2003), Beslan school hostage crisis (2004) and suicide attacks on the Lubyanka subway station and Park Kultury (2010)¹⁸ have threatened the government in Moscow and may determine a new approach in fighting against Muslim insurgency (or independent movements???).

In an attempt to resolve serious problems in the Caucasus, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev decided on January 20, 2010 to create the North Caucasus Federative Region, naming the former governor of Krasnoyarsk territory (Siberia), Alexander Hloponin, as his representative in this predominantly Muslim region. This federal region includes the republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkezia, North Ossetia, Chechnya and Stavropol territory. “The Kremlin’s Administrative Solution”¹⁹ for North Caucasus and especially for the Chechen crises was to solve the social and economic problem in that zone by increasing investment and developing entrepreneurship, to end corruption and not least, to spread education for the young generation by developing a large school system.²⁰ The Kremlin realized that a soft approach to Caucasus problems is better than violent action, even if the process requires a long term plan. On the other hand, success could “temperate the climate” in other separatists zones like Ingushetia, Dagestan and Balkaria or even in self-declared independent republics like Ossetia, Abkhazia or Transdnistria. But most important to Russia is avoiding the independent or secessionist domino game.

Russia has two different standards: one for the enclaves (as you will see in the next chapter) with a Russian population majority,²¹ and another one for populations that want to reach their independence like Chechnya, Dagestan or Ingushetia. For these nations, Russia has no compassion, their territories are part of Russia and that is it.

Their independence struggles are considered terrorist attacks and Russian repression is brutal.

What do Chechnya, Ingushetia, North and South Ossetia, Dagestan and Abkhazia have in common and why do these regions have importance for Russia? I have identified some major reasons:

First of all, if Russia loses the Caucasus mountain peaks and passes, she would lose any possibility to influence Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and in this case she could lose the entire area to the south, the zone between the Caspian and Black Seas and her access to the Middle East. In this moment, the North Caucasus region is Russia's forward outpost either for her southern defense or for her expansion in the south (if she recovers her lost power).

Also, the region contains a huge net of oil and gas pipelines that connect the energy sources and producers from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia with important markets such as the European Union, Israel and China. To maintain her dominance in this region and to have control over the main natural resources - oil and gas, gives Russia an ascendant position in its relationship with the EU and Turkey. You will see in the next chapter this is the key for affirming herself as a regional power.

Finally, Russia is threatened by the possibility of having in her proximity an Islamic fundamentalist country which can encourage her large Muslim population to fight for independence. The fact that all of the countries from her neighborhood in Central Asia share the same religion, beliefs and tradition, could create geopolitical advantages for Russia traditional enemies – Iran and Turkey, and could open to China access to Caspian oil and gas resources (knowing that China is investing in developing

countries without imposing political or religious conditions). On the other hand in case of a global conflict with the Islamic world, the Russian Muslims from within the country could become a “fifth column” and this is what the Russian Federation wants to avoid today in Chechnya.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been fighting since 1988 for control over Nagorno Karabakh, an enclave with an Armenian majority (190.000 inhabitants, 80% Armenians, 20 percent Azeri) but located on Azerbaijan’s territory because of a political decision by Iosip Stalin in 1923. In 1988 Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev could have ended the conflict but was more preoccupied with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. A new military intervention, in this case in the Caucasus zone, would have damaged the image of his reform program (glasnost and perestroika). After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, when these two republics became independent, the conflict escalated and transformed into a real war (1992-1994) that caused thousands of casualties and created hundreds of thousands of refugees on both sides. As an effect of the armistice signed in 1994 (through Russian negotiation), Nagorno Karabakh was fully controlled by the Armenians together with a strip of land that connects it with Armenia (20 to 25 percent of Azeri’s territory). As a result, the Nahicevan province (an Azeri enclave) is totally isolated from Azerbaijan. In response, Azerbaijan blockaded Armenia. The situation is still explosive. In 2010, the agreement signed by Moscow and Yerevan extended the stationing of the Russian military troops until 2044 (the 102nd Russian military base, located in Giumri, with more than 3000 soldiers), and changed the power equilibrium in the zone. Furthermore, Turkey’s growing power has threatened Armenia in the last few years and this is another reason for Erevan to cultivate a close

relationship with Russia, a country which shares similar Orthodox traditions. In fact, the international relationship between Armenia and Turkey is still affected by the fact that Turkey doesn't recognize the Armenian genocide of 1915-1916, when over 1.5 million Armenians were killed by the Ottoman authorities. In October 2009, Armenia and Turkey signed an agreement to establish diplomatic relationship and to reopen the common border, but ratification of the text has been delayed because of mutual accusations of lack of commitment to reconciliation.

On the other hand, Azerbaijan naturally tends to be closer to Turkey because of a common Islamic and Turkish origin. It would seem more natural to be closer with Iran, but once again, the past seriously hinders their relationship. As I said, in 1928, after the Russia-Persia war, historic Azerbaijan was divided into two parts; the southern region went to Iran and the northern part to Russia. Living inside Iran are around 25-30 million Azeri people (the population of Azerbaijan is currently 8.5 million).

Likewise, the importance of Azerbaijan grows exponentially today, because of its huge gas and oil resources. US Department of States stated in its official site that "Azerbaijan is considered one of the most important spots in the world for oil exploitation and development. Proven oil reserves in the Caspian Basin (16 billion barrels and possible reserves of up to 200 billion barrels), which Azerbaijan shares with Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran, are comparable in size to North Sea reserves several decades ago."²² This importance was seen in the American decision to support and to fund construction of the BTC oil pipeline (the pipeline carries more than 1 percent of global oil resources) that was inaugurated on May 25, 2005.

The BTC pipeline (1 million barrels per day capacity), links the Caspian sources of oil from Baku (capital of Azerbaijan) to Tbilisi (capital of Georgia) and finally with Ceyhan (a Mediterranean Turkish harbor). The route of this oil pipeline bypasses Iran and Russia in order to bring Caspian oil to US, Israel and Western Europe markets. The US Company Bechtel was the main contractor for design and construction and British Petroleum (BP) is the majority shareholder (the final cost of the project was \$3.9 billion).²³ Most important, this project contributes to energy security independence for Israel.

Another important project financed by the Western economies is the BTE natural gas pipeline (Baku, Tbilisi, Erzurum), with a capacity of 8.8 billion cubic meters per year, which transits Georgia and ends in Turkey where it is connected to Europe through the Greek gas network; but Azerbaijan's export capacity would be more if the planned European project Nabucco pipeline could be implemented.

The BTC and BTE projects couldn't be overlooked by Moscow, which saw its monopoly on energy routes to Europe threatened. Russia is trying to develop another oil and gas project (the South Stream pipeline)²⁴ in order to preserve her economic interests and political influence in the Caucasus zone.

Georgia declared her independence in 1991, and seemed to be truly independent from Russia's influence just after 2004 when Mihail Saakashvili won the presidential elections.

The first conflict was in **South Ossetia**. The Ossetians, Caucasian people, live in two provinces: North Ossetia, a Russian province with 600,000 inhabitants and South Ossetia, a part of the Georgian republic with 100,000 people, 65 percent Ossetians and

30 percent Georgians. It is worth noting that 90 percent of South Ossetia's current population has Russian passports.²⁵ This province declared her independence in 1990 but very soon the military conflict erupted. As a result of the war, 93 villages were completely burned, more than 1000 people were killed and 60 – 70,000 persons were displaced.²⁶ The conflict ended when Georgia decided to join the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States – a regional organization which included 12 of the 15 former Soviet republics) in December 1993, which allowed the establishment of Russian military bases on its territory. Russia continued to encourage Ossetia's separatist actions, and the presence of its troops in Georgia complicated OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) action to end the conflict. However, in 1999 (during the OSCE Summit in Istanbul), Moscow accepted withdrawal of its troops from Georgian territory. The last Russian military forces left Georgia (not including the disputed enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) in 2007 after postponing this move several times.

The second conflict was in **Abkhazia**. The territory of Abkhazia (8432 square km) lies between the rivers Psou in the north and Ingur to the south, as a province in the northwestern corner of the Republic of Georgia (this territory was annexed to Georgia by Stalin in 1933, as an autonomous republic. According to Abkhaz authorities the region has a population of 215,972 inhabitants, of whom 43.8 percent are Abkhaz people, 21.3 percent Georgians, 20.8 percent Armenians, 10.8 percent Russians and 0.7 percent Greeks.²⁷ In the last century most of the Abkhaz Muslim population emigrated to Turkey and the Greek minority was deported especially in Armenia and in

Nagorno Karabakh. In the Soviet period, the Georgian population was displaced in this zone and the Abkhaz population lost majority status.

The conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia erupted violently in August 1992 when Abkhazia tried to declare independence. Georgian troops quickly occupied the town of Sukhumi (the capital of Abkhazia and its Black Sea harbor), and forced the so called “Abkhaz Government” to withdraw to Gudauta, where the Abkhaz forces organized the resistance. With massive military and logistical support from Russia and ten thousand volunteer troops from Muslim republic from the North Caucasus, including Chechens led by the “Russian hero” Shamil Basaev (after that, as leader of the independence movement of Chechnya, he was known as “the number one terrorist of Russia”), Abkhazian troops were able to repel the Georgian Army on the left side of the river Ingur (unofficial border between Georgia and Abkhazia). The war lasted a year, and most of the fightings took place in the city Sukhumi; 10,000 people were killed and nearly 250 thousand were displaced in Georgia and Russia.²⁸

The first progress in Georgia occurred after 2004 when Saakashvili was elected president. In his foreign policy, the regime led by Saakashvili has reshaped relations with the EU and US. In June 2004, Georgia was included in the ENP (European Neighborhood Policy),²⁹ an EU program which manage the relations with its neighbors. Georgia’s participation in ENP has enabled the EU’s involvement in the South Caucasus region throughout EIDHR (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Right).³⁰ In the same year, Georgia became the first country from the Caucasus and Central Asia to sign an Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, but desire to join didn’t materialize at the Bucharest NATO Summit in 2009 due to conflicts between

country members and especially because of the opposition of Germany and France (these two countries tend to have a close relationship with Russia which was never comfortable with NATO and EU enlargement).

Since 2004, the US has become the largest donor to Georgia (in infrastructure projects, administrative programs and technical assistance, regional trade and military assistance), with over one billion dollars per year, while Georgia has turned into one of the American partners in the war against terrorism with a great military contribution for the Coalition in Iraq and Afghanistan. Georgia is considered by the US as being a vital ally for the future strategic challenges of NATO and as a significant transit country both in terms of security and diversification of energy suppliers.

On the other hand Saakashvili's internal policy was focused on eliminating corruption, stabilizing the economy and fiscal management, and not least on territorial reunification of all historical Georgian provinces. Regarding the last political goal, the new Georgian leader started with a success. The Georgian soldiers succeeded by removing forces that supported Aslan Abasidze, the leader of Abkhazia, a semi-autonomous region sustained by Russia (in Batumi, the largest town in Abkhazia, where Russia had until 2006, a military base) and to reestablish Georgian control in this "separatist province". But very soon the situation became again very dangerous for Georgia independence.

After recognition of Kosovo by the US and most of the Western countries in February 2008, the two self proclaimed republics, South Ossetia and Abkhazia started to press Russia to formally recognize them. Russia has not gone that far, but she made an important step in this direction in April announcing the intensification of its relations

with these two territories and in particular trade, determining the growth of tensions in the region.

In July, hostilities between Ossetians and the Georgia Armed Forces restarted. The situation escalated very quickly and transformed into a bloody war between Georgia on one side and South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Russia (who supported them openly), on the other. On August 7, 2008 the Georgian Army started military operations in South Ossetia, using artillery and missiles launchers. Russia immediately accused Georgia of “genocide” claiming that more than 1600 civilian Ossetians were killed. These allegations couldn’t be proven and Human Rights Watch accused Russia of exaggerating the number of victims. On August 8, The 58th Russian Army invaded South Ossetia through the Roki Tunnel controlled by Russia. Meanwhile Russian Air forces conducted a series of air raids on Georgian territory. After several days of heavy fighting, the Georgian Army was ejected from South Ossetia. On August 11 the Russian Army began its march in western Georgia and at the end of the day conquered the Georgian town of Gori, in the central part of the country (about 50 miles from Tbilisi). Under the pressure of the international community (especially the US and EU), president Dmitry Medvedev ordered a stop to military operations. He accepted the peace agreement proposed by Nicolas Sarkozy, president of France who had visited Moscow (ceasing hostilities, removing the use of forces as means of solving the conflict, the withdrawal of Georgian and Russian troops in the positions before August 7, free access for humanitarian aid and initiating international negotiations on the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia).

Georgia signed the peace agreement on August 15 followed by Russia on August 16. We have to note that on August 26 Russia recognized the independence of these two separatist regions (Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru are the only other countries that have recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia at present). The Russian troops are still in military bases in these two “republics”.

What did Russia want to show us with the invasion in Georgia?

The main objective was to send a clear message (especially for US and EU) that Russia is again a great power which has the will and ability to resist any violation of her “vital space”, traditional sphere of influence and strategic interests. Many political analysts consider that the war in Georgia marked the finish of the “multipolar world” and the beginning of a new international order in which Russia will have an important role, especially in Eurasia.

The second objective was to obtain a “demonstrative effect” in Russia’s neighborhood, and even if it seems to be strange, Russia focused primarily on the countries closest to Europe (most geo-political analysts believes that Ukraine was the main audience).

One targeted group consists of countries with the tendency to be in close relationship with Russia like Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (from Asia) or Belarus, Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria (from Europe). Russia tried in this case to strengthen their ties with Moscow in order to counterbalance or to stop the expansion of the US and EU interests in her so called “traditional sphere of influence”. The result was seen in Ukraine where a pro-Russian president won the elections in 2010, in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 (another “revolution” made in

Russia), in Hungary and Bulgaria, countries that officially support the Russian energetic project (the South Stream gas pipeline agreement was signed In November 2010 in Sofia making the Nabucco project almost irrelevant), or in Belarus and Kazakhstan (countries which signed with Russia an agreement for custom union). Moreover, military speaking, Russia succeeded in reinforcing her defense posture with military outposts in Baranovici and Vileyka (Belarus), Sevastopol (Ukraine - who signed a new agreement to allow the presence of her troops until 2044), Tiraspol (Republic of Moldavia), Erebuni and Gyumri (Armenia), Sary Shagan and Baikonur (Kazakhstan), Kant and Och (Kyrgyzstan), and Nurek and Dushanbe (Tajikistan). The exterior ring was closed with the future installation of another two military base with more than 3000 soldiers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

To strengthen this defensive ring, Russia , Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan agreed on February 4, 2009, in Moscow, to form a Collective Rapid Reaction Force of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)³¹ that will be located in Russia and partially in Kyrgyzstan and that will have the mission of responding to any external threats. A day before this event Russia signed an agreement with Belarus on building a unified air defense system (as a response to US intention to install elements of its anti-missile shield in Romania and Bulgaria), and obtained from Kyrgyzstan acceptance to put into operation a modern radar station in Tchui.

A second group consist of countries that understand Russia's new policy like the revival of the Soviet tendency to dominate small countries from her neighborhood, and in this category I want to include Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania (from Eastern Europe), and Azerbaijan and Georgia (from the Caucasus). For these

countries, the war in Georgia (from Russian perspective) was pursued to supply uncertainties about the US's ability to ensure regional security and finally to diminish efforts to oppose Russia's policy for new security architectures in Europe and for preservation of the Russian energy design in Asia. For these countries the message was that Russia is no longer an inert geopolitical stakeholder as in the 1990's and now she returns to a more traditional doctrine – the preservation of the vital space and strategic interests in her “near abroad”. Now Russia hopes to discourage the continuation of the Western intrusion into this space, forcing the West, to limit its interests in Black Sea zone and Caucasus in exchange for Moscow's cooperation and assistance on other sensitive issues of international security.

Turkey as a Rising Regional Power

The end of the Cold War led to a decline in Russian-Turkish relations and the dissolution of the Soviet Union increased Turkish's freedom of action in South Eastern Europe and in Caucasus. Turkey is one of the visible rising regional powers. The country is trying to expand its influence inside the former Ottoman Empire borders. In this moment, she has not focused on certain regions or countries and seems more willing to show her Islamic roots and her independence in regional foreign affairs by promoting close relationship with the European Union, Russia, Georgia and Armenia but also with Israel, Azerbaijan, Iran and Syria.

Ankara's diplomatic efforts have been supported by Turkey's geostrategic position, by its regional politics and trade. Turkey is both a NATO (1952) and OIC³² (1969) member, a country which started EU accession negotiations in 2005, but also a country with strong ties in the Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia. It's an active

mediator and an important stakeholder in international effort to stabilize Iraq after the withdrawal of US forces and to clarify the status of Kirkuk³³ (the city is wanted by the Kurds to be incorporated in a Kurdistan autonomous region in spite of Iraqi resistance). Moreover, Ankara's position is vital for dialogue with Israel (in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process), critical for supporting US military effort in Afghanistan (see the military base from Incirlik)³⁴ and indispensable for energy corridors building.³⁵

The lack of a strong EU and Russian presence in the Middle East and Caucasus regions helped increase the Turkish influence in that zone. It also explains the critical tone adopted by Ankara regarding the US and Israel, and allows a closer relationships with Syria and Iran. In fact Turkey's perception abroad that it would be a "vassal" of the US was shattered in 2003 when Ankara's parliament refused to allow US troops to open a second front against Iraq through Turkey. Moreover, the Turkish decision to improve relations with Iran and Syria amid deterioration of diplomatic relationship with Israel (because of the Gaza Siege) dissatisfied Washington.

The coming to power of the Justice and Development Party, and the reforms imposed by the Prime Minister Recep Erdogan, has alleviated the strictly secular establishment³⁶ imposed in the past by the Turkish Army. Without promoting Islamic fundamentalism, these reforms have permitted the restoration of the Muslim identity of Turks that created a wave of sympathy towards Turkey in other predominantly Islamic countries. The traditional Turkish isolation politics has been replaced with a policy of open doors for all countries from Turkey's neighborhood, based on multilateral cooperation. Ankara's policy considers the promotion of mutual interdependence between neighbors in order to avoid conflicts and ensure stability, and Turkey's

advantage is having close cultural and linguistic ties with majority Muslim areas of the Caucasus and sharing the same democratic values with Western countries.

Politically speaking, in the last 20 years, Turkey moved closer to Russia than to the US. Officials from Ankara and Moscow seem to share the same view regarding their close neighborhood and the US engagement in the Middle East and Caucasus zone has been seen as an intrusion in their sphere of interests. Moreover, financial losses and the lack of tangible benefits accruing from Turkish support of the US in the Gulf War, the autonomy of the Iraqi Kurds and the reluctance of the US to take direct military actions against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), have contributed to the growth of Anti-Americanism in Turkey.³⁷

Therefore, after the conflict in Georgia, Ankara proposed "The Stability and Cooperation Platform" in the Caucasus which included Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, countries with a history of rivalry, but very important for the region's geostrategic stability. A proposal for creating a forum for cooperation in the Caucasus was raised in August, 2008 by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, who declared the platform could restore confidence between countries and will solve the energy security problems. In spite of the issues of Armenian genocide, Turkey advanced the proposal for Armenia to become the alternative route for oil and gas from Russia or other providers from Central Asia.³⁸ If this forum is successful it will allow Moscow and Ankara to strengthen their positions in the Caucasus region, thereby weakening the influence of the United States.

As a regional leader after the collapse of the USSR, Turkey saw the opportunity to extend its influence by providing cultural, political, economic and even military

support in countries from her close neighborhood. The main beneficiary of this policy was Azerbaijan, where Ankara sought to influence the implementation of a similar political model, a Muslim religious democracy. At the same time, Turkey tried and succeeded in preventing Baku from falling under the influence of Iran or Russia, being actively involved in the economic and military reconstruction of Azerbaijan. In 2001, Turkey assumed the role of International Security Guarantor for Azerbaijan when the tensions between this country and Iran rose up and after that, when the Nagorno Karabakh conflict was breaking out, was the first state that denounced Armenian involvement in support of the separatist forces.

Economically, Turkey has supported several oil and gas pipeline projects from Azerbaijan to Israel and Europe (BTC and BTE), via Georgia. The benefit of Azerbaijan is the possibility of becoming (along with other countries in the Caspian region) an oil and gas supplier for European markets that would bring high revenue for their economy to the detriment of Russia. Turkey also hopes to place herself on the future energy supply map of the zone, to become an oil and gas hub, and to ensure energy independence. To achieve this, Turkey has strengthened relations with Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Iran despite historical disputes, ethnic or confessional differences. Turkey also supported Georgia and Azerbaijan (and from 2009 Armenia) to be included in the draft East – West energy corridor³⁹ in order to weaken Russia's energy monopoly.

Military speaking, Turkey offers assistance in the region for countries such as Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. She built a naval base at Aktan in

Azerbaijan and harbor facilities at Yaralievo in Kazakhstan, and has provided armament to both of these countries.

Regarding Iran, the Turkish position seeks a closer relationship that reduces the weight of the US, and strengthens Ankara's position in the region. Turkey, which shares border with Iran, has considerable economic interests in that country. Approximately 15 percent of Turkish natural gas needs are supplied by Iran, and the volume of trade between these two countries reached \$10 billion. In 2009, Turkey and Iran signed a memorandum which allows Turkey to sell 17.5 billion cubic meters of gas per year, from South Pars, one of the largest Iranian natural gas deposits. On May 17, 2010, Brazil, Turkey and Iran signed an agreement that provides an exchange of 1200 kg of uranium low rich (3.5percent) with 120 pounds of a nuclear fuel (20 percent enriched), provided by the major nuclear powers (US, Russia, China or France) for medical research nuclear reactor of Teheran (in spite of the international concern regarding Iranian nuclear program).⁴⁰ One month later, on June 9, 2010, Turkey and Brazil voted against UN Security Council Resolution 1929 for imposing new sanctions against Iran.⁴¹ Ankara believes that the sanctions will affect her economy and doesn't want to repeat the economic losses incurred after the US invasion of Iraq (around \$40 billion in 2002).⁴² "The volume of trade between Turkey and Iran ... can pick up to \$ 30 billion if the UN sanctions are eliminated" said Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in an interview on Kanal 24 TV Station.⁴³

In terms of energy, Russia and Turkey are very closely connected. Russia is the most important commercial partner of Turkey with exchanges evaluated at \$ 28.2 billion (2008), and the main supplier of gas and oil to that country. Russia supplies Turkey with

65 percent of its natural gas and 40 percent of its oil imports. Turkey and Russia are partners in the Blue Stream gas pipeline,⁴⁴ and in South Stream project.⁴⁵ Furthermore, in 2009 they signed several agreements to build on the territory of Turkey two nuclear power plants (one at Mersin and another at Akkuyu, on the Mediterranean Sea, in the Antalya region; the station will belong to Russia, and Turkey will buy the electricity made by it), and several hydroelectric power stations (Bayram and Balik).⁴⁶ Likewise Russia has agreed to support the civil engineering design of the Samsun – Ceyhan oil pipeline, which will allow the transportation of oil to Europe, passing the overloaded Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits.

For Russia and the coastal states of the Black Sea, but also for the countries of the Caucasus, the Turkish Straits are their single link with the world energy market (the oil delivered through Black Sea passages is estimated at 2.9 billion barrels per day). Traffic has tripled since 2001 and more than 150 vessels cross the Straits every day. For safety reasons, Turkey established some limitations; oil tankers with a length of over 200 meters or those which carry dangerous freights can pass the Straits only during the day, a fact which combined with periods of bad weather creates notable delays in the winter time.

Furthermore, the straits regime does not allow the entry of more than nine military vessels (from a non Black Sea powers), with a total weight exceeding 30,000 tons, which cannot remain in the sea more than three weeks.⁴⁷ For this reason the mission Active Endeavor couldn't be extended into the Black Sea and an US Nimitz class aircraft carrier, with more than 97,000 tons can't move into the Black Sea. The dissension with US which has lobbied for a revision of the Montreux Convention,

appeared especially after Romania and Bulgaria's admission to NATO, and again when the US invaded Iraq, and military leaders requested an active military presence in region. Another effect of this Convention could be seen during the War in Georgia in 2008, when the Pentagon wanted to send a "humanitarian transport" in Georgia, two hospital ships with a tonnage of 69,360 tons, but Ankara denounced this as exceeding the limits of the convention that I mentioned before. In fact, Turkey wants to preserve her status in the space between Black Sea and Caucasus and the presence of NATO and the US in this zone can affect its predominance. Russia clearly understands this position and has encouraged an independent Turkey by political, economic and military means. At the same time Turkey has considered Russia an "indispensable actor" in the region.⁴⁸

To conclude this analysis, what is the Russia interest in pursuing a partnership with Turkey? I think that the answer is obvious:

- To assure her domination in the Caucasus region and Eastern Europe, using Turkey as a transit country for her gas and oil resources. At the same time, Turkey is a very important economic partner for Russian economic growth and a factor for increasing her attractiveness in relation with the countries from within its sphere of influence;

- To strengthen her position in the Caucasus and Central Asia, using Turkey as a secular Muslim link with her Islamic population from the North Caucasus and with countries from Central Asia and even from the Middle East;

- To ensure that Turkey will use control over the Bosphorus strait (in accordance with Montreaux agreement), by blocking naval traffic especially of US military or the future European battle groups in the Black Sea;

- To strengthen and encourage an independent Turkey in international politics, to maintain the power balance in the region and to force the other powers, such as the US, EU and China to engage Russia in problems like frozen conflict, arms limitation, nuclear non-proliferation, energy security, etc. Russia exploits Turkey's frustration regarding EU accession, the cooling political relationships with the US and Israel, and pushes Turkey to strengthen her partnership with Iran, Syria and support for the Palestinian cause.

European Union

Successive enlargement of NATO and the EU have brought the littoral countries from the Black Sea and Caspian Sea closer to the EU, and their actions in the international arena have begun to affect the "European project" in terms of politics, economics and security issues. The EU started with a proactive approach in its relationship with these countries, to support their democratic development, their effort for achieving social, political and economic stability. Through the European Neighborhood Policy (launched in 2004) and the Eastern Partnership Program (initiated by the EU at the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council in Brussels, on 26 May 2008), the EU has tried "to project the EU system of basic values (democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, free market economy principle and sustainable development)" in all countries in her proximity and "to transform these neighbors into reliable and stable partners". Moreover, these projects have sought "to create an integrated architecture of cooperation which allows for enhanced EU-Russia

cooperation and intensified ENP without antagonizing Russia.”⁴⁹ Between 2007 and 2010, the EU financed many social, judicial and economic programs in the Eastern Partnership countries as follows: Armenia – 98.4 million Euros, Azerbaijan – 92 million Euros, Georgia – 120.4 million Euros (and additional founding up to 500 million Euros in order to counter the war’s effect from 2008), Republic of Moldavia – 209.7 billion Euros, Ukraine – 494 million Euros.⁵⁰

Likewise, the programs have also sought to enhance stability and security at the EU’s borders by promoting good neighborhood relations and effective cooperation, and to increase confidence between partners. For instance, EU diplomacy was involved in calming the tensions between Russia and Georgia in 2008 (French president Nicolas Sarkozy made a great contribution) and now in solving the problem in the Republic of Moldova.

The Republic of Moldavia tried to deal with her separatist “republic” Transdniestria many times after the end of their war in 1992, but a strong Russian military contingent remains in the zone as a “peace keeping force” and Moscow has been influencing the peace process in a negative manner. The Moldavia peace plan, proposed by the EU and called “3D” can be summarized as: *demilitarization* – withdrawal of the Russian troops and disarmament of Transdniestria military and security forces; *decriminalization* – suppressing contraband, arms and human traffic and other criminal activities; *democratization* – implementing the rule of law and human rights in the region. This peace plan can be considered as a model of how the EU seeks to solve the “frozen conflicts” from its neighborhood and how the EU wants to promote its policy and democratic values.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (which includes all the EU members but also Russia and the countries from the Caucasus and Central Asia), the EU, Russia and Ukraine were involved in this peace process. Some agreements for Russian troop withdrawal were signed, but the Russian Duma never approved them. The European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership Program were seen by Russia as mechanisms designed to complete the destruction of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Russian's reaction was to keep the ex-Soviet States in her sphere of influence, even if the means used were totally undemocratic or hegemonic. Moreover, in term of energy, Russia used her huge oil and gas resources as well as her large energy infrastructure to influence the EU's politics and decisions.

European countries had been dependent on energy imports from the Middle East and Russia and events like the "oil and gas disputes" between Russia and Ukraine⁵¹ and between Russia and Belarus⁵² showed them the vulnerability of the European energy system. When the Black Sea became a border between East and West (after January 1, 2007, when Romania and Bulgaria joined in EU), the EU had a chance to solve its energy needs and to lessen energy dependency on Russia, building an alternative route for gas transit, connecting Western Europe with the natural gas sources from the Caspian Sea and Middle East regions by implementing some projects such as the Nabucco pipeline.

The Nabucco pipeline is designed to run from Turkey via Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary to Austria and could be connected with Azerbaijan, Iran or Iraqi gas sources. Because of the criticism of some EU members that the pipeline will supply just a few

countries from south-eastern Europe, and as a result of the recent economic crises, the financial sources of the project have not yet been determined.

On the other hand, in spite of the EU community acquis for energy production, transport and transit,⁵³ some European member countries have tried to sign separate agreements with Russia, like Germany for the Nord Stream pipeline project or Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria and Italy for the South Stream pipeline project.

Russia exploited all this hesitation and weakness, solved the problem regarding gas transit, signed an agreement for a new pipeline's construction that will feed almost all countries from Europe, increasing their dependency on Russian resources.

A good example of this idea is when in June 2008 Russian president Medvedev proposed a new European Security Treaty for the whole Euro-Atlantic space. Russia argued that this proposal for a new security alliance between the EU and Russia is an opportunity for Europe, because the Old Continent is no longer a priority for Washington, and especially for the Barack Obama administration. The meeting in Deauville (France) between Angela Merkel, Nicolas Sarkozy and Dmitry Medvedev, on October 20, 2010 seems to support the idea that the agreement is possible (in spite of the concern of Poland and Romania). The new Euro-Russian Common Security concept stresses that "rather than setting up a new institution, the EU should call for the creation of a regular informal European security triad that would build on the Merkel-Medvedev idea of an EU-Russia security dialogue but expand it to include Turkey. The triad – which would bring together Europe's major security powers in the same way that the G20 convenes the world's economic ones – could meet regularly to discuss the major security issues in our continent and the overlapping neighborhoods

of its central players. These include anything from ethno-national conflicts to energy cut-offs. The core members of the dialogue would be the EU, Russia and Turkey (until it becomes an EU member state)... a new institutional order in the continent that keeps the EU united, Russia post-imperial and Turkey European.”⁵⁴

In fact Russia wants to eliminate the current US diplomatic and military design that contains her and to keep all the current or emergent powers away from her area of interest, as steps toward recovering her global power status.

The United States and the Its Options

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the US started the “war against terror”, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was overthrown, and the al Qaida insurgents were driven out into the mountain area near the border with Pakistan. A huge logistic supply system was necessary to support the US military effort and in this case countries from Caucasus and Central Asia and also from Eastern Europe became more important for the US. The new military bases in Romania and Bulgaria (Eastern Europe), in Kyrgyzstan (Central Asia) and the military assistance strongly provided to Georgia (Caucasus) had extended the US capacity not only for deploying forces in the Middle East and Central Asia but also for keeping the door open for democracy in this part of the world. For example, Ukraine, Republic of Moldavia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia but also Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan were encouraged to democratize their institutions and to build closer relations with the EU and USA.

The US presence in this zone accomplished more than the EU has done with the European Neighborhood Policy. It is relevant what the president of Romania stated

welcoming the US presence in the Balkans area and Black Sea region: “It is clear that the United States seems to be more interested by the instability in the Black Sea area than the Europeans are. They have already understood the importance of the Black Sea for the security of Europe.”⁵⁵

US policy in the zone is to promote democracy, to expand free trade (especially in oil and gas) and to fight against terrorism, organized crime and the smuggling of weapons of mass destruction.

Economically speaking the US encouraged the littoral states of the Black Sea and Caucasus to join into regional organizations such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) or GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development in order to improve regional security and stability and to expand regional trade agreements. The US presence in the region has brought a lot of money for investment in oil and gas infrastructure projects, but also a wind favoring liberty and democratization for many nations. “Colored revolutions” in the region are considered by Russia a direct consequence of the US presence. They succeeded in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan but failed in blood in Uzbekistan and the Republic of Moldavia. Failure in Uzbekistan led to closing of the US military base in this country. Later the war in Georgia, new elections in Ukraine and Moldova, and the Custom Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan strengthened the Russian position in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Initially, Russia interpreted the US war in Afghanistan as an opportunity to act freely against the independence movements or separation tendencies inside of her boundaries. Russia considered Islamic fighters from Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia as terrorists and after that claimed international support in her fighting in the

Caucasus. Subsequently, Russia's position was more nuanced and she became increasingly dissatisfied and concerned because of the US presence in her "area of responsibility," especially when the American troops didn't seem to finish quickly their job in Afghanistan.

After the Cold War, the USA did not trust Russia because of her uncertain aspirations and continued a policy of containment. The US wants to be prepared in case of undemocratic developments in Russia and wants to prevent a powerful Russia that wants to spread control over all countries from its neighborhood.

On the other hand, the US has had to cooperate with Russia in the management of global issues such as arms limitation, nuclear non-proliferation, the Greater Middle East (including military support in Afghanistan), and Iran (as I showed Russia is involved in Iranian's nuclear program and a good partner in energy trade), and in this case the Government from Washington has had to make concessions or to negotiate with Russia.

The biggest danger in this equation is the fact that the US could fail to understand the changes in the regional balance of power after the war in Georgia, and to continue to believe that Russia is a trusted partner interested in providing global security and mutual understanding. In this scenario, the US will be unable to honor the security guarantees given to new allies, and will be forced to accept defeat and the limit of his own power. This will lead to an accelerated decline in international standing, because of the fact that Russia, the EU, Turkey and Iran (even China and India) have a very clear strategy regarding the Caucasus and why not regarding supremacy in the world.

As long as the US remains anchored in the Middle East and Afghanistan it will be very hard to find the necessary diplomatic resources to offset Russia's policy in her neighborhood. At the same time it will be a much tougher job for the US to isolate a Security Council permanent member state, which has privileged relations with the most powerful countries in the world such as future peer competitors China, EU and Japan or Brazil, India and Turkey.

While Washington sees Moscow as a rival or even an enemy in their effort for democratization and reform agenda of Caucasus region, Berlin and Paris share and understand Russia's legitimate right to maintain its sphere of influence around its borders. In the case of Georgia and Azerbaijan (but also in Ukraine and Belarus) Germany and France maintain a reserved attitude and may accept efforts to turn these countries into Russian satellites.

To isolate Russia means to have a strong agreement with the EU, China and other powers, but now the US like a "unipolar actor" hasn't any option because all the stakeholders want to counter balance the power of the US. All the US can do is to limit Russian access to high technology (in term of technological progress Russia is quite vulnerable), to influence her exclusion from some international organizations, or to simply sabotage her regional initiatives (such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Collective Security Treaty Organization and Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform). But this will have a price – it will improve the relationship between Russia and the major players and finally could chance the balance of power in her favor.

The US must convince the European partners that its foreign policy is based on the strengthening of the relationship with the EU countries which share the same cultural and economic values and interests. The US has to demonstrate this by involvement in solving the common threats such as the impact of the financial crisis, energy insecurity, climate change and immigration (these have been identified in a EU survey as major risks and threats that the EU has to face in the next 20 years, and from my point of view this is the case for the US as well).

This may sound strange, but the solution to counterbalance Russian influence in the space between Black Sea and Caspian Sea is tied to and depends on agreement between the EU and US. To be more explicit, I have identified some ways for achieving this goal:

- Reforming NATO as a Euro-Atlantic Alliance that serves as a collective defense organization and as an institution designed to manage the risks and threats mentioned. It has to take into account finding the necessary mechanisms to balance the influence of the political decisions of its powerful members at the expense of the small states, but avoid setting the consensus rule that would weaken the organization because of the divergent interests;

- Supporting EU enlargement with the countries from former Yugoslavia and closing the strategic partnership with Turkey, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan as a first step toward their integration in the Euro-Atlantic Alliance (it will be most important, particularly for Europe, to demonstrate that is prepared to accept Muslim populations in this alliance);

- Encouraging and supporting Turkey's accession into the EU's project would make Ankara more malleable on the matters of the Black Sea, Aegean islands or in reunification of Cyprus. Accession would mean diversification of energy transport routes and ensure European energy security. Turkey as an EU member would not endanger the US status-quo in the region and would help to enhance the European project. Instead, delaying Turkey's accession, as we can see today, could lead this country into an Islamic fundamentalist government and to zero sum politics in the Mediterranean Sea and Caucasus zone. This option could transform the government from Ankara into an opponent for the US and EU and this will serve Russia's interest;

- Transferring the US military bases from Western Europe to new sites in the states from Central and Eastern Europe (to be close to the potential threats of the Alliance, and to give the possibility of efficient and prompt reaction), in order to strengthen the alignment Baltic Sea – Black Sea. On another hand we cannot forget that in the last 20 years European NATO members, and especially Germany and France, have sought to decrease the US military presence in Europe. Therefore, the US had to find alternatives for their military bases in Europe, and the solution could be Poland and Romania in Eastern Europe and Georgia and Azerbaijan in Caucasus. These military bases can also serve to connect the antimissile system projected to be installed in Central Europe to the South Caucasus against potential threat imposed by Iran;

- Supporting the independence of the South Caucasus countries and encouraging their road to democracy (the EU has many instruments for this, and the US has sufficient experience to implement them). At the same time is very important to

establish military assistance in the partner countries that are not NATO members such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Moldavia or even from Central Asia, to integrate them in the European Neighborhood Policy and Eastern Partnership, in fact to give them security alternative solutions;

- Financing alternative energy projects that try to by-pass Russia (like Nabucco, AGRI, etc) in order to assure energy security for European partners, and transferring of technologies to countries that supply energy within the strategic partnership;

In conclusion, the US's interest is to return in Europe due to the fact that future solutions for Eastern and Central Europe regarding energy security, the "frozen conflicts" of the Caucasus, and democratic development of Russia are strongly connected with the future evolution of the partnership between the EU and US. A strong US-EU partnership linked with closer relationships with partners from the Caucasus and Asia would allow Washington "to perpetuate America's own dominant position for at least a generation and preferably longer still; and to create a geopolitical framework that can absorb the inevitable shocks and strains of social- political change while evolving into the geopolitical core of shared responsibility for peaceful global management."⁵⁶

At the same time counterbalancing the advance of Russia in the region will prevent future military conflicts, promote democracy and rule of law and expand the free trade market in the space between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, as a good example for all countries from Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Endnotes

¹ "Geostrategic players are the states that have the capacity and the national will to exercise power or influence beyond their borders in order to alter ... the existing geopolitical state of affairs. They have the potential and/or the predisposition to be geopolitically volatile. For whatever reason—the quest for national grandeur, ideological fulfillment, religious, messianic, or economic aggrandizement—some states do seek to attain regional domination or global

standing; Geopolitical pivots are the states whose importance is derived not from their power and motivation but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of their potentially vulnerable condition for the behavior of geostrategic players. Most often, geopolitical pivots are determined by their geography, which in some cases gives them a special role either in denying access to important areas or in denying resources to a significant player.” Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives”, *Univers enciclopedic*, Bucharest, 2000: 53.

² “Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States and its NATO allies have constructed a post-Cold War order that effectively shuts Russia out. Although NATO and the European Union have embraced the countries of central and Eastern Europe, they have treated Russia as an outsider, excluding it from the main institutions of the Euro-Atlantic community.” Charles A. Kupchan, “NATO’s Final Frontier,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66217/charles-a-kupchan/natos-final-frontier> (accessed January 13, 2011).

³ For example: the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003), the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004) and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan (2005);

⁴ “The Russia-Georgia war of August 2008 was an example of traditional sphere of influence politics. It easily fits into the logic of the ‘contested neighborhood’ in which two great powers – in this case the West and Russia – struggle over decisive influence in a certain region. Russia acted against Georgia in order to demonstrate its will to secure a sphere of privileged interests on the territory of the former Soviet Union.” Ivan Krastev & Mark Leonard, “*The Spectre of a Multipolar Europe*”, European Council on Foreign Relations, October 2010: 19, http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/the_spectre_of_a_multipolar_europe_publication (accessed November 11, 2010).

⁵ “Ukraine is a country that has spent most of the past centuries split between competing empires, and the fault lines run deep. Historically, the west of the country was governed for more than 300 years by either the Polish or Austro-Hungarian empire. The final parts of western Ukraine were added only in 1939. Meanwhile the east was dominated by Russia. For most of this time, the dividing line was the great Dnepr River. This division is reflected in language, religion and even the name of the country, which means ‘frontier’. The east is Russian-speaking and Christian Orthodox. The west is mostly Ukrainian speaking and Greek Catholic, a religion orthodox in character but owing allegiance to the Pope.” Chris Stephen, “Fears of East – West split in Ukraine,” *The Guardian*, 28 November 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/nov/28/ukraine.theobserver> (accessed November 11, 2010).

⁶ “The EU’s ‘unipolar moment’ is over. In the 1990s, the EU’s grand hope was that American hard power would underpin the spread of European soft power and the integration of all Europe’s powers into a liberal order – embodied in NATO and the EU – in which the rule of law, pooled sovereignty and interdependence would gradually replace military conflict, the balance of power and spheres of influence. However, the prospects for this unipolar multilateral European order are fading. Europeans were quick to hail the rise of a multipolar world, but much slower to spot the parallel emergence of different poles within their own continent. Russia, which was never comfortable with NATO or EU enlargement, is now powerful enough to openly call for new European security architecture.” Krastev & Leonard, *The Spectre of a Multipolar Europe*, 1.

⁷ “Caspian region oil reserves might be the third largest in the world (following Western Siberia and the Persian Gulf) and, within the next 15 to 20 years, may be large enough to offset Persian Gulf oil. Caspian Sea oil and gas are not the only hydrocarbon deposits in the region. Turkmenistan's Karakum Desert holds the world's third largest gas reserves-three trillion cubic meters-and has six billion barrels of estimated oil reserves. Other oil fields in adjacent Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan further increase the known reserves of cheap energy available to oil-dependent economies and are drawing outside investors... Petroleum geologists claim to have discovered 17 billion barrels of crude oil in the Caspian Sea, an amount roughly equal to the European North Sea fields and almost one-third of Venezuela's holdings. Current estimates indicate that, in addition to huge gas deposits, the Caspian basin may hold as much as 200 billion barrels of oil-33 times the estimated holdings of Alaska's North Slope and a current value of \$4 trillion. It is enough to meet the United States' energy needs for 30 years or more. This sizable estimation still does not match the Persian Gulf states' estimated reserves...Projected oil reserves for the Iranian, Kazakh, Azeri, Turkmenian and Russian Caspian littoral are 25 billion metric tons-nearly 15 percent of the world's total oil reserves (and 50 percent of its gas reserves).” Lester W Grau, “Hydrocarbons and a New Strategic Region: The Caspian Sea and Central Asia,” *Military Review*, Fort Leavenworth, May/June 2001, vol. 81, iss. 3: 17.

⁸ The term Frozen Conflicts is used to refer to the so-called “republics” of Nagorno Karabakh (de facto independent from Azerbaijan), Abkhazia, and South Ossetia (de facto independent from Georgia), and Transdniestria (de facto independent from the Republic of Moldavia).

⁹ Dr. George Friedman, “The Geopolitics of Russia: Permanent Struggle”, *STRATFOR*, October 15, 2008, http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/125333/analysis/20081014_geopolitics_russia_permanent_struggle (accessed December 20, 2010).

¹⁰ The Southern Caucasus is the region situated between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, bordered to the north and south by the Caucasus Mountains (the Great Caucasus, in the north and the Lesser Caucasus in the south are divided by the basins of the Rioni and Kura rivers). This zone includes the territory of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, northern Turkey and northern Iran (around 72,000 square mile), and is inhabited by over 50 nationalities. The largest ethnic groups are Azeris, Georgians, Armenian, Chechens, Ossetians, Abkhazians and Dagestanis.

¹¹ “The Treaty of Sèvres (August 10, 1920) was the post World War I pact between the victorious Allied powers and representatives of the government of Ottoman Turkey. The treaty abolished the Ottoman Empire and obliged Turkey to renounce all rights over Arab Asia and North Africa. The pact also provided for an independent Armenia, for an autonomous Kurdistan, and for a Greek presence in eastern Thrace and on the Anatolian west coast, as well as Greek control over the Aegean islands commanding the Dardanelles.” Britannica Online Encyclopedia, “Treaty of Sèvres,” *Britannica.com*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/536839/Treaty-of-Sevres> (accessed December 23, 2010).

¹² “In the Treaty of Lausanne (July 24, 1923) Turkey recognized the loss of its Arab provinces, but plans for an independent Armenia and an autonomous Kurdistan were abandoned. The Greeks lost their zone around Izmir, and no other powers retained zones of influence. Turkish territory in Europe expanded, but control over Mosul in Iraq and Alexandretta in Syria remained with the British and French respectively. Finally, the conference recognized

Turkish sovereignty over the straits (Bosporus and Dardanelles), although there were some concessions in the form of a demilitarized zone and an international commission to supervise transit through the straits.” Treaty of Lausanne, *Encyclopedia.com*, http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Treaty_of_Lausanne.aspx (accessed December 23, 2010).

¹³ Farid Alakbarov, “Baku: City that Oil Built”, *Azerbaijan International*, summer 2002, 28-33, http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai102_folder/102_articles/102_overview_alakbarov.html (accessed December 23, 2010).

¹⁴ “In politics and sociology, divide and rule (derived from Latin *divide et impera*) (also known as divide and conquer) is a combination of political, military and economic strategy of gaining and maintaining power by breaking up larger concentrations of power into chunks that individually have less power than the one implementing the strategy. In reality, it often refers to a strategy where small power groups are prevented from linking up and becoming more powerful, since it is difficult to break up existing power structures. Maxims ‘Divide et impera’ or ‘Divide ut regnes’ are traditionally identified with the principle of government of Roman Senate. Typical elements of this technique are said to involve: creating or encouraging divisions among the subjects in order to forestall alliances that could challenge the sovereign; aiding and promoting those who are willing to cooperate with the sovereign; fostering distrust and enmity between local rulers; encouraging frivolous expenditures that leave little money for political and military ends.” Multilingual Archive, “Divide and rule,” *WorldLingo.com*, http://www.worldlingo.com/ma/enwiki/en/Divide_and_rule (accessed December 23, 2010).

¹⁵ “The Northern Caucasus region is characterized by ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity. The Northern Caucasus is one of the most ethnically complex regions in the world. Dagestan, with a population of about 2 million, contains more than 30 distinct ethno-linguistic groups. Georgia’s population is approximately 65% Georgian, but the Georgians have important local affiliations (Kartvelians, Mingrelians, Svans, Ajars), and there are Armenian, Azeri, Osset, Greek, and Abkhaz minorities. The region is also a point of intersection between confessional communities. About 80% of Azeris affiliate with Shia Islam, and there are other Shia communities, including the Talysh of Azerbaijan and some Dagestanis. Most Dagestanis associate with Sunni Islam, as do the Chechen and Ingush, the Circassian peoples (the Adyge, Cherkess, and Kabardins), about 20% of the Osset population, and 35% of Abkhaz. The Georgian Orthodox and Armenian Monophysite churches are among the world’s oldest organized Christian communities, and the majority of Ossets are Orthodox Christians as is the region’s Slavic population. There also are small Jewish communities.” Dr. Craig Nation, “Russia, the United States and the Caucasus,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, February 2007, 1-2.

¹⁶ In 1944 Stalin deported almost all the Chechens and Ingushs to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Siberia, due to alleged collaboration with the German *Wehrmacht*. Large numbers of those deported perished in the process. In 1957, after the death of Stalin, the new Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev allowed survivors to return to the Caucasus, but the Prigorodny district, a natural gas rich region, was transferred from Ingushetia to North Ossetia, a district with a large Russian population.

¹⁷ Global Security.org, “First Chechnya War - 1994-1996,” *Global Security*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/chechnya1.htm> (accessed December 22, 2010).

¹⁸ Bridget Johnson, *Terrorist Attacks on Russia*, March 29, 2010, About.com, <http://worldnews.about.com/od/russia/tp/russiaterrorism.htm> (accessed December 27, 2010).

¹⁹ Constance A. Philipot, "The North Caucasus: Russian Roulette on Europe's Borders," *Parameters*, vol. 40, no. 2: 95-97.

²⁰ "Alexander Khloponin singled out three major problems in the Caucasus: excessive state funding, a high level of unemployment and corruption. To change the situation the envoy's plan is to focus on four clusters of development in the Caucasus - energy, tourism, agriculture and education The Russian leader (Dmitry Medvedev) offered support to A.K. to suppress centers of radicalism in Caucasus ... The Caucasus will shake off its ill fame in ten years' time" Ruslan Chigoev, "Khloponin: Three problems and four clusters," *Georgia Times*, March 1, 2010, <http://www.georgiatimes.info/en/analysis/31431.html> (accessed December 23, 2010).

²¹ Here I am referring to Russian citizenship, not to Russian nationality. In all of these self-proclaimed republics Russians are a minority nation: 42 percent of the population in Karachaevo-Cherkessia, 32 percent in Kabardino-Balkaria, 29 percent in North Ossetia, 23 percent in Ingushetia and Chechnya, 9,2 percent in Dagestan and 38 percent in Kalmykia . These data are from 1989 and the source is a Russian one (<http://www.russiansabroad.com/> , accessed December 23, 2010). Today, many political analysts appreciate that the Russian population is a minority in almost all Caucasian republics.

²² US Department of State Home page, *Background Note: Azerbaijan*, June 14, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2909.htm> (accessed January 13, 2011).

²³ Andrew G. Marshall, "The Georgian War," *Geopolitical Monitor*, August 30, 2008, <http://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/pipelines-the-georgian-war-1092/> (accessed January 13, 2011).

²⁴ "The South Stream project, designed to annually pump 31 billion cubic meters of Central Asian and Russian gas to the Balkans and on to other European countries, involves Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Italy and Greece. The pipeline's capacity could be eventually increased to 63 billion cubic meters annually. The gas pipeline is expected to start operating in late 2015. The project is part of Russia's efforts to cut dependence on transit nations. It is a rival project to the EU-backed Nabucco." RIA Novosti Website Group, *IEA prioritizes Nabucco Gas Pipeline over Russia backed South Stream*, February 24, 2010, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20100224/157991942.html> (accessed March 7, 2011).

²⁵ Graeme P. Herd and Grace Allen, "Russia Demographic Crisis: The Threat to Sovereign Democracy," *Centre for World Dialogue*, Volume 11, Winter/Spring 2009, <http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=443> (accessed January 15, 2011).

²⁶ Amnesty International Publication Home page, *In the Waiting Room, Internally Displaced People in Georgia*, London, 2010, 9, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR56/002/2010/en/7c07f880-b002-4f0c-87f2-fab9a6690a85/eur560022010en.pdf> (accessed January 13, 2011).

²⁷ Source: "Population census in Abkhazia in 2003", translation from Russian, <http://www.ethno-kavkaz.narod.ru/rnabkhazia.html> (accessed December 23, 2010).

²⁸ Amnesty International Publication, *In the Waiting Room, Internally Displaced People in Georgia*, 10.

²⁹ “The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was developed in 2004, with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and our neighbors and instead strengthening the prosperity, stability and security of all. This ENP framework is proposed to 16 of the EU's closest neighbors – Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. Within the ENP the EU offers our neighbors a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to common values (democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development). The ENP goes beyond existing relationships to offer political association and deeper economic integration, increased mobility and more people-to-people contacts. The level of ambition of the relationship depends on the extent to which these values are shared.” *European Neighborhood Policy*, European Commission Home page, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm (accessed January 14, 2011).

³⁰ “The key objectives of the EIDHR are: enhancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in countries and regions where they are most at risk; strengthening the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform, in supporting the peaceful conciliation of group interests and in consolidating political participation and representation; supporting actions in areas covered by EU Guidelines: dialogue on Human rights, human rights defenders, the death penalty, torture, children and armed conflicts and violence against women; supporting and strengthening the international and regional framework for the protection of human rights, justice, the rule of law and the promotion of democracy; building confidence in and enhancing the reliability and transparency of democratic electoral processes, in particular through monitoring electoral processes.” *EuropeAid Development and Cooperation*, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr_en.htm (accessed January 14, 2011).

³¹ “Russia is ready to commit the 98th Airborne Division and the 31st Air-Assault Brigade to the force, which will provide security to all the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) states: Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The force will defend member nations against foreign military aggression; perform special operations to counter terrorism, extremists, and drug trafficking; and help in times of natural disasters.” Pavel Felgenhauer, “A CSTO Rapid Reaction Force Created as a NATO Counterweight,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, February 5, 2009, Volume 6, Iss. 24 in *The Jamestown Foundation*, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34459 (accessed January 15, 2011).

³² “The Organization of The Islamic Conference (OIC) is an international organization grouping fifty seven states which have decided to pool their resources together, combine their efforts and speak with one voice to safeguard the interests and secure the progress and well-being of their peoples and of all Muslims in the world. The organization was established in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on September 25, 1969 when the first meeting of the leaders of the Islamic world was held in the wake of the criminal Zionist attempt to burn down the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque on August 21, 1969 in the occupied city Al-Quds.” *Permanent Mission of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Home page*, www.oic-un.org (accessed November 11, 2010).

³³ “A United Nations (UN) report released in May 2009 outlined several options for treating Kirkuk, including joint Arab and Kurd control of the city. The report was generally viewed favorably by Ankara.

However, Turkish, Iraqi, and U.S. officials have expressed concern over the Kurdish parliament's passage of a new draft constitution on June 24, 2009. The constitution lays claim to Kirkuk as well as the disputed provinces of Nineveh and Diyalah. If it is ratified in its current form, it could exacerbate ethnic and political tensions between Iraqi Kurds and Arabs as well as spark tensions with Turkey." Stephen F. Larrabee, "Troubled Partnership: US-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change", *RAND Corporation*, 2010, 26, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG899.pdf (accessed November 11, 2010).

³⁴ "In response to the events of September 11, 2001, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) began in October 2001. Incirlik air base served as a main hub of humanitarian airlift operation to Afghanistan, MC-130 special operations missions, KC-135 refueling missions and sustainment operations for deployed forces. The aerial port managed a 600% increase in airflow during the early stages of OEF. On June, 2005 Incirlik activated one of the Air Force's C-17 Globemaster cargo hub operation in support of OEF and OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom). Hub operation delivers much needed supplies such as add-on armor, ammunitions, tires, engines, and more to US Forces in theater via the 385th Air Expeditionary Group." *Incirlik Air Base History*, Incirlik Air Base Home page, <http://www.incirlik.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=5344> (accessed November 11, 2010).

³⁵ "Turkey is of strategic importance for the security of energy supplies to the EU, lying at the crossroads of various existing and future pipelines carrying both oil and gas from many core producer regions, namely Russia, the Caspian Sea, the Middle East and Northern Africa." Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Republic of Turkey, *Turkey's Energy Strategy*, Ankara, June 2006, 8 http://www.econturk.org/Turkisheconomy/energy_turkey.pdf (accessed November 11, 2010).

³⁶ "Within this perspective of liberalization and democracy, the JDP government has taken important steps for the 'civilianization of Turkish politics' – the decreasing power of the military in politics and an enhanced role for the parliament, 'the people'. In general the JDP perceives the military and the bureaucracy as the main obstacles for the democratization and liberalization in the country. Some circles close to JDP go as far as naming the military-bureaucracy as an 'oligarchy', controlling not only the core of the politics but also the public sphere. Against these 'elitist' circles that are seen as defending the status quo, the JDP claims that they are the 'real representatives of the people' who are demanding change and put themselves as the defenders of democracy and reform. On the one hand there is the JDP that underline that their main aim is to liberalize and open up the system to the demand of the people and make the necessary changes, while on the other there are those that oppose the JDP based mainly on the concerns about the nature of the changes, claiming that they are the footsteps of a long-term Islamization of the society. They see the reforms as a part of an 'Islamization via liberalization' policy that the JDP has been carrying out since coming to power. The critics of JDP underline that the government has been carrying the reform packages in order to weaken the power of the secular establishment, including the military that is the defender of the Republican order." Dr. Ozlem Tur, "The Justice and Development Party in Power: Politics and Identity in Turkey," *The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House*, London, September 27, 2007, 4, http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/9849_280907tur.pdf (accessed November 11, 2010).

³⁷ “Anti-Americanism in Turkey has deeper and more-complex political and cultural roots than elsewhere in Europe. The United States is seen by many Turks as having a history of opposing Turkish national interests; examples include the two Cyprus crises, the 1975 arms embargo, the economic losses incurred by Turkey during the first Gulf War, and U.S. support for the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish entity in northern Iraq. Thus, the initial U.S. reluctance to assist Turkey against the PKK came against the background of a long list of Turkish grievances at the hands of the United States that dated back some 50 years. In addition, anti-Americanism in Turkey draws on deep-seated suspicion and mistrust of the West due to the role played by the Western powers in the collapse and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire (the ‘Sevres Syndrome’). Stephen F. Larrabee, “Troubled Partnership: US-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change”, *RAND Corporation*, 2010, 17-18, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG899.pdf (accessed November 11, 2010).

³⁸ Vlad Popovici, “Black Sea Region Stands at Energy Crossroads”, *Oil & Gas Journal*, Tulsa, December 7, 2009, Volume 107, Iss.45, 56.

³⁹ “The East-West Energy Corridor was developed as one of the pillars of Turkey’s energy strategy and Turkey has demonstrated this by developing oil and gas pipeline projects. The East-West Energy Corridor has been developed in close cooperation with Azerbaijan, Georgia and the United States. The Corridor essentially aims at transporting Caucasian and Central Asian oil as well as natural gas to western markets through safe alternative routes. The main components of the Corridor are the Baku – Tbilisi - Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil pipeline, the Shah-Deniz natural gas pipeline (Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum) and the Trans-Caspian Natural Gas Pipeline projects, railroads and other infrastructure.” The Foreign Affairs Ministry of The Republic of Turkey, *Turkey’s Energy Strategy*, 3.

⁴⁰ Through this agreement, Iran sought to give assurance to the international community that its nuclear program is exclusively peaceful and has only civil purposes, in spite of international concerns. The Iranian nuclear program started in the 1970’s, when the government signed an agreement with the German companies Siemens and Kraft Union to build two nuclear reactors in Bushehr. Construction was suspended after the Islamic Revolution (in 1979 the project was 85 percent completed), when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini declared nuclear weapons to be immoral and contrary to the precepts of the Koran. However, the war against Iraq (in which chemical and biological weapons were used on a large scale) led Khomeini to decide in 1985 to resume the nuclear program. After the end of the war, the US succeeded in convincing Germany to discontinue construction of the reactor. Iran turned to other possible sources such as China, India, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, but the US blocked the participation of these potential partners in the development of the Iranian nuclear program. Finally, in 1995 Iran signed an \$ 800 million agreement with Russia to complete the construction of the first reactor (construction began in September 2002). On September 2001, the US accused Iran of having one of the world’s most active program to acquire nuclear weapons and missile from Russia and China, and US President George W. Bush included Iran in his “axis of evil” along with North Korea and Iraq. On December 2002, the US accused Teheran of seeking to develop a secret nuclear program and published some satellite images from two nuclear sites (Natanz and Arak). The UN Security Council has imposed sanctions on Iran for failure to halt uranium enrichment in every year after 2006. The last such package of sanctions, Resolution number 1929, was adopted on June 9, 2010 with 12 votes in favor, 2 against (Turkey and Brazil) and 1 abstention (Lebanon).

⁴¹ Ertugrul Apakan (Turkish Ambassador to the UN), speaking before the vote, said his country “was fully committed to all its non-proliferation obligations and, as such, was a party to all major relevant international instruments and regimes. Indeed the development of nuclear weapons by any country would make it even more difficult to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Turkey also wished to see a restoration of international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program. Turkey had signed, with Brazil and Iran, the Tehran Declaration, which aimed to provide nuclear fuel to the Tehran Nuclear Research Reactor. It had created ‘a new reality’ with respect to Iran’s nuclear program; the agreement was designed as a confidence-building measure, which, if implemented, would contribute to the resolution of substantive issues relating to that nuclear program in a positive and constructive atmosphere. The Tehran Declaration provides a new and important window and opportunity for diplomacy. Turkey was therefore deeply concerned that the adoption of sanctions would negatively affect the momentum created by the Tehran Declaration and the overall diplomatic process. ... [the Turkish] delegation’s vote against the resolution should not be construed as indifference to the problems emanating from Iran’s nuclear program ... Turkey supported a diplomatic solution and the sanctions-based resolution would be adopted despite unrelenting efforts to that end. However, the resolution’s adoption should not be seen as an end to diplomacy ... Our expectation from Iran is that to work towards implementation of the Tehran Declaration [it] must remain on the table and Iran should come to the negotiating table with the 5+1 [five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany] to take up its nuclear program, including the suspension of enrichment,” *Security Council, 6335th Meeting, Resolution 1929*, June 9, 2010, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm> (accessed November 11, 2010).

⁴² William Paul and Tekin Ali, “The Iraq War, Turkey, and Renewed Caspian Energy Projects”, *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 62, no.3, Summer 2008: 392-393.

⁴³ Erol Izmirli, “Unrest Against Turkey’s Position on Iran,” *Southeast European Times*, June 11, 2010, (translation from Romanian language), <http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/ro/features/setimes/features/2010/06/11/feature-01> (accessed November 11, 2010).

⁴⁴ In March 2005, Gazprom completed the construction of Blue Stream, a 1213 kilometer long natural gas pipeline, which cost \$ 3.2 billion, linking gas fields from Krasnodar (Northern Caucasus) through a marine pipeline passing under the Black Sea to Durusu gas terminal on the Turkish north coast. Russia expected to deliver to Turkey about 16 billion cubic meters of gas per year via Blue Stream.

⁴⁵ In 2009 Turkey allowed Russia to undertake exploration in Turkish Black Sea territorial waters and became an official partner for the Russian-led natural gas project South Stream (a strong competitor to the Nabucco project supported by the EU and US). When completed (projected for 2015) the South Stream pipeline will carry 35 percent of Russian natural gas to Europe (from Beregovaya compressor station, through Turkish and Bulgarian territorial waters in the Black Sea, to central Europe via Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and Austria. Its capacity will be 63 billion cubic meters of gas per year. The cost is estimated at 25 billion Euros.

⁴⁶ Andrey Vidyaykin, “Turkey – Russia Relations: Future Perspectives”, *Bilgesam*, 2010, www.bilgesam.org/en/images/sunular/turkey-russiarelations.ppt (accessed November 11, 2010).

⁴⁷ See the *Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits*, Montreux, July 20, 1936, Article 18:

“(1) The aggregate tonnage which non-Black Sea Powers may have in that sea in time of peace shall be limited as follows:

(a) the aggregate tonnage of the said Powers shall not exceed 30.000 tons;

(b) If at any time the tonnage of the strongest fleet in the Black Sea shall exceed by at least 10.000 tons the tonnage of the strongest fleet in that sea at the date of the signature of the present Convention, the aggregate tonnage of 30.000 tons mentioned in paragraph (a) shall be increased by the same amount, up to a maximum of 45,000 tons. For this purpose, each Black Sea Power shall, in conformity with Annex IV to the present Convention, inform the Turkish Government, on the 1st of January and the 1st of July of each year, of the total tonnage of its fleet in the Black Sea; and the Turkish Government shall transmit this information to the other High Contracting Parties and to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations;

(c) The tonnage which any one non-Black Sea Power may have in the Black Sea shall be limited to two-thirds of the aggregate tonnage provided for in paragraphs (a) and (b) above;

(d) In the event, however, of one or more non-Black Sea Powers desiring to send naval forces into the Black Sea, for a humanitarian purpose, the said forces, which shall in no case exceed 8.000 tons altogether, shall be allowed to enter the Black Sea without having to give the notification provided for in Article 13 of the present Convention, provided an authorization is obtained from the Turkish Government in the following circumstances: if the figure of the aggregate tonnage specified in paragraphs (a) and (b) above has not been reached and will not be exceeded by the dispatch of the forces which it is desired to send, the Turkish Government shall grant the said authorization within the shortest possible time after receiving the request which has been addressed to it; if the said figure has already been reached or if the dispatch of the forces which it is desired to send will cause it to be exceeded, the Turkish Government will immediately inform the other Black Sea Powers of the request for authorization, and if the said Powers make no objection within twenty-four hours of having received this information, the Turkish Government shall, within forty-eight hours at the latest, inform the interested Powers of the reply which it has decided to make to their request. Any further entry into the Black Sea of naval forces of non-Black Sea Powers shall only be affected within the available limits of the aggregate tonnage provided for in paragraphs (a) and (b) above.

(2) Vessels of war belonging to non-Black Sea Powers shall not remain in the Black Sea more than twenty-one days, whatever is the object of their presence there.”

⁴⁸ “Political (Turkey – Russia) dialogue on the Black Sea/Caucasus region intensified when it became clear that the U.S. is pushing for a larger role for NATO in the region. The revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine added to the sense of Turkish ‘encirclement’ as Romania and Bulgaria were admitted to NATO in 2004. Troubled by the growing uncertainty vis-à-vis its European aspirations Turkey responded to insistent Russian overtures to collaborate in the region. Turkish opposition to extra-regional penetration of the region is mostly explained by two factors: First, that there is no need for NATO to enter the region as existing regional structures are adequate and in concert with NATO operations; second, that any regional initiative must include Russia. As recent as last spring a Turkish foreign ministry official noted that ‘without Russia we cannot fulfill our objectives. Russia needs to be on board.’ Ankara strongly believes that antagonizing Moscow would only destabilize the region and thus constantly refers to the need to involve ‘all littoral states’ in any regional scheme. Furthermore, Ankara argues that there are not any significant threats emanating from the region. Turkey also believes that Russia is a key party to the resolution of the frozen conflicts in the region. In clear continuity with Turkey’s traditional respect for its former adversary Ankara sees Russia as an indispensable actor in the region. Such respect was amply demonstrated during a recent security address by Turkey’s

Chief of Staff, Hilmi Özkök. General Özkök highlighted the Turkish General Staff's view that Russia's geography, energy resources and human capacity is likely to allow Russia to become a global power again." Suat Kiniklioglu, "The Anatomy of Turkish – Russian Relations", *The Brookings Institution*, Washington DC, 2006, 11.

⁴⁹ Johanes Varwich and Kai Olaf Lang, "European Neighborhood Policy – Challenges for the EU – Policy Towards the New Neighbors," *Barbara Budrich Publishers*, Germany, 2007: 15-28.

⁵⁰ Source: "Documentary – Everything about the Eastern Partnership in Questions and Answers," *Interlic Press*, May, 6, 2009, translation from Romanian, <http://www.interlic.md/2009-05-06/documentar-totul-despre-parteneriatul-estic-in-intrebari-shi-raspunsuri-10078.html> (accessed January 8, 2011).

⁵¹ "Ukraine remains the main transit country for Russian oil and gas exports to Europe through the pipeline infrastructure developed by the former Soviet Union. About 22% of total Russian oil exports cross or are consumed in Ukraine. The natural gas percentage is even higher at more than 80%. Ukrtrasnafta, operator of the Ukrainian oil pipeline system, stopped Russian oil shipments in the Odessa-Brody pipeline in October 2009 for several weeks, forcing Lukoil's Black Sea Odessa refinery to halt activity and reverse its flow to import oil directly from Azerbaijan instead. SOCAR, the Azeri national oil and gas company, opened an office in Kyiv on October 12, and has confirmed negotiations to buy another Black Sea refinery in Ukraine, the Kherson refinery. These actions worsened Russian Ukrainian relationships, already strained by nearly continuous natural gas import volume and transit fee disagreements. Russia and Ukraine signed a new gas supply contract after the winter 2008-09 supply crisis, but in October 2009 Ukraine announced a desire to reopen negotiations in an effort to reduce contracted volumes to 33 billion cu m/year in 2010 from 42 billion cu m/year in 2009. Ukraine also seeks to renegotiate gas transit fees, considering Naftogaz's current annual transit revenue of roughly \$2.5 billion to be less than adequate. Gazprom is strongly opposed to reopening the contract and the Ukrainian government has warned that, although it will not disrupt gas transit to Europe during winter 2009-10, it cannot guarantee transit for 2010-11 without a new contract." Vlad Popovici, *Black Sea Stands at Energy Crossroads*, 56.

⁵² "About 80 percent of Russian gas exported to Europe normally goes through Ukraine, while the rest is carried via Belarusian pipelines. Gazprom has insisted that the dispute with Belarus will not hurt European customers as the company can reroute gas supplies through the Ukraine transit pipeline. Russia has cut gas supplies to both Ukraine and Belarus several times in recent years due to payment disputes. In early 2009, a cutoff to Ukraine left many Europeans without heating amid a freezing winter. The shut-downs have prompted the EU to search for alternate gas supply routes." Natalia Vasilyeva, "Russia Reopens Belarus Gas Tap but Dispute Goes On," *The Washington Times*, June 24, 2010, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jun/24/russia-reopens-belarus-gas-tap-dispute-goes/> (accessed January 15, 2011).

⁵³ "The Commission will continue to enhance its relations with energy producers, transit countries and consumers in a dialogue on energy security. This dialogue will promote legal and regulatory harmonization through the Baku Initiative and in the framework of the ENP and the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue. This would be pursued also through the expansion, when appropriate, of the Energy Community Treaty to Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine, also through the Memoranda of Understanding with Azerbaijan and Ukraine, PCA and trade agreements, WTO

accession negotiations and, where appropriate, via other bilateral energy agreements. The objective is to provide a clear, transparent and non-discriminatory framework, in line with the EU *acquis*, for energy production, transport and transit.” *Commission of the European Communities*, “Black Sea Synergy – a new regional cooperation initiative”, Brussels, April 11, 2007: 5, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf (accessed January 15, 2011).

⁵⁴ Krastev & Leonard, *The Spectre of a Multipolar Europe*, 63-66.

⁵⁵ Saffet Akkaya, “US Military Bases in Romania and Bulgaria and their Possible Implications on Regional Security,” *Al-Jazeera: Cross-Cultural Understanding*, January 25, 2009, <http://www.ccun.org/Opinion%20Editorials/2009/January/25%20o/US%20Military%20Bases%20in%20Romania%20and%20Bulgaria%20and%20their%20possible%20Implications%20on%20Regional%20Security%20By%20Saffet%20Akkaya.htm> (accessed January 15, 2011).

⁵⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, 23.